POETRY QUARTERLY

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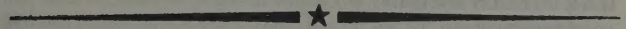

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EDITORIAL

When these words appear in print it is possible that the great conflict which we have lived through for five terrible years will have come practically if not completely to an end. The physical struggle was the reflection of the psychological conflict in the mind of man. It is to be hoped that the victory of the younger nations, a victory which has been realized and made possible by the blood and sweat of youth, will lead to years of peace in which the young will take their place and not return to a society which has no use for them. In the Spring of 1942 we wrote in this place of the Singapore mentality, of the defeat of the out-dated and the unintelligent. There is still time to hope that the victorious nations will turn to the young everywhere for the drive and vision and understanding without which no world can survive and no culture is possible.

There seems to be springing up in the minds of the public and the less intelligent kind of reviewer some confusion about the meaning of the term 'surrealism' or 'superrealism' as in this country it has occasionally been called. Anything that the hurried and uninformed reader does not understand at a glance can be dismissed with a puzzled grin as surrealism. Of course the truth is that surrealism only reaches a very small public, and is only of interest to a section of the intelligentsia. At one time it had an appreciable influence on modern verse. Recently that influence has waned considerably and clarity in contemporary poetry is much more evident. But modern psychology, as it is understood today, which is something totally different to what went under that name thirty or forty years ago, has had its influence on the younger writers. Free association in which some link may still lie hidden in the mind, images dissociated from their normal concatenation, the seeming perversity of dream and a greater freedom in the use of language and rhythm, have coloured the verse of today. All this has little connection with surrealism, but much more with the able critical work of the preceding generation of the inter-war period. None of the poems in this magazine is surrealist. But perhaps this is an understandable error in a public which knows little about poetry beyond the often quoted text-book examples of the best known poets of the past. What is much more reprehensible is the ignorance and confusion of some contemporary critics—most of them very bad poets themselves—who seem to resent the existence of their betters.

FRED MARNAU

Soria Moria

O the years in Africa, magic heart of the sea
that takes away the failings of us all.
The marble lords and the iron horses
of Europe have gone down in the waves
of the decades and the arches of the Roman
arena count the dead in their circle. Reddish
and bronze the leaves fall now
from the branches. This then is autumn, thorny
and bare. The column of oaks by the field,
rain-drunk its heads, is prepared
for the journey.
The thunder of hoofbeats fades; buried
under the burning stones,—green scarab
where the eye was,—lie the serene years of the Africans,
and the lions circle, and the summer sings
and round our wiry hair has spun the foolish wreath.

Air

And when the night comes and the wonderful glass
is in splinters, the milky stars wander
through the halls and bring the wind
and scatter the brown flame. What was light,
what the sun had mirrored, lies in fragments,
sharp crystals, and the drops are dropping,
the curtain is torn, the thunder rolls.
Ah, when the gigantic mountains of houses
are shattered, thrown open the roaring rocks,
then at last you will know how fair were
the bodies and voices they held.

(Translated by ERNST SIGLER)

EMANUEL LITVINOFF

The Steeds of Fear

Oh, if you touch me where the moment pierces,
If even, your fingers are sensitive and kind,
What do you discover but a throbbing artery
Like a wild drum beating?

You cannot touch the shadows flying by,
The ghostly thundering stallions of my fear,
Nor know that I am riding without reins,
Naked, with the wind of desire in my hair,
Or how my glancing pity is a whip
Lashing my furious horses.

You cannot see the lovely form pursued,
A white cloud flying many suffering shapes.
My fire must melt, my fury turn and rain
Drenching the sweet earth, earth that has captivated
All of my tenderness.

For this, alone for this
I am a hunter with a murderous force
Riding my four great stallions without rein
Whose names are Death, Compassion, Fear, Desire.

No, do not touch the wound with your kindness
Or pray for the pain to cease. This chase is anguish
Enough, but for love of the earth
It is beautiful.

But close your gentle eyes and you will see
Four dark clouds driving through a knotted sky,
A radiance pursued by many forms,
and how the green, the still green earth beneath
Shares shadow with brightness,
And how she smiles.

HUGH GORDON PORTEUS

Phœnician Images

Here well the sources, loveliest of all
The source of love and some say source of all
    That seek the way their various ways to sea.

Some times you may surprise, about the Spring,
Most aromatic plants, or trembling
    Close by the rough cove, curious Narcissus.

Peer deeper then, through the transparent fathom
Where sands run down into the chasm and tomb
    Of every sort of vessel. O reflect

How underneath the swell and breaking waves
The current ever changes and deceives
    The each rejected fragment turns again

Where History magnified inverted lies
Or proffers to confound your inventories
    Amazing presents from a fading past.

Past bluffs and issues of the fretted marge
The tides' aside and gloss disclose the large
    Discursive hand, and grave parentheses—

For every phase, her distant peregrine
Emblem of majesty—and ever green
    Past towers tottering, the moonstruck seas.

O sporting gods and kingdoms gone, this port
Hands more than temple down, or crumbling fort
    Though the great mound tell also of their antics;

Past arid wastes are wars, the spoil of years
Leaves living only in the livid scars
    Familiar flora of a formal nature.

Corruption multiplied beneath these stones
Now Roman figures, now Phœnician columns,
    Then Babylonian tables and then altars

Each image now he coldly will unfold
The quick piled pattern in his scales of gold
    Explains—the deadly and inquiring adder.

And once again, about the Fall, some sense
The fragrant thyme there; there the mountain pines.
    Here red Adonis bleeds. Here Christmas rose.

For most be held still in the vice of Eve
And Adam downcast in the darkening grove.
    So Astar through the shades sought Adon mourning.

Who walked in grief through thorn and flowering judas
In Venus' glass descried our Lady's features
    While dancing rags still graced the sacred fig.

Corroded now the caskets and the sceptres,
The sages withered and decayed the cedars,
    While placid censers smoke behind the screen.

Confused the broken images, the dream
Divided by the Cross; the bloody stream
    Striving in red and twisted lines to sea.

ALAN ROOK

Frost Falls Early

Frost falls early this year. Early
frost in the year foretells an iron spring,
sapping the light, stopping the bone, clearly
limning the eyes on the stair, the heart's lost beat,
the empty corridor's whisper of unseen feet
ebbing and flowing. Shall we stop the frost falling?

We have been worried by our ruins lately.
Too worried. And our changing vision plays
darkly on fear, deeply on the year's desperately
fluctuating landskip: yet we sleep
only to reckon profit: we hope
only in sleep to balance years and days.

Heaven is not far, but we have made it further
striving to read some sense in history.
God is no stranger. We make him so. We gather
strength to resist the journey; treasure power
to sin and expiate, acting our
part by drawing pride from misery.

Whose act is now our action? Whose sin
do we this winter expiate in blood?
What hope?—when wiser eyes than mine have seen
no promise, no viaticum or eucharist,
no guarantee of health, no shining Christ
waiting to welcome where his fathers stood.

Can we not learn to see the act's fruition
as an eternal sum of ways and means;
acting freely, not seeking a condition
of possible good, or lack of possible blame,
nor as a traveller yearning forward home
endorsed, expunged, perfected by his dreams?

Actions are ours: sins are our heritage.
Those cold, these hard to realize. But whose
We know not, nor why. Only from age to age
nursed in eternal darkness the seed
grows blindly through a miasma of blood,
comes heavily to birth, heavily like these.

How merciful, if we grasp it, are the ways
of this strange, ruthless cycle; act and sin,
knowledge and expiation! These bare days
precede the act, not follow. We redeem
our fathers' sin, not hand our own sin on.
Our load is light. Our frost precedes their sun.

DAVID WRIGHT

Three Poems on a Theme

I

O look the rust is eating at the root:
I am a brother of the one-eyed man,
the dog with the wrong leg, and wounded foot
the bull with broken horn, and hare
starved by a growing tooth.
There's no society
but what degrades, in all humanity,
pitied by the possessors of pity,
for the defective in some quality.
So turn, so stand,
already on a tower with no stair,
impossible to descend.
I am a brother of the one-legged man,
the faulty piston and the splintered cog.
I see the acid biting at the heart,
I feel the rust is eating at the root.

II

It's four years living in a house
stalking from vacant room to room,
doors locked and windows shut.
Sometimes I at the window sit,
look at the granite valley cut
a long inhuman rift below.
I stare through the transparent glass
and shapes of hurricane and storm
and shapes of sun and sunlight pass;
I whom four walls so insulate
watch the wind smash the supple grass,
the hundred years' tall pine tear down,
like night of the long knives, the rain
stamp on the tower and the town;
I watch without a hair displaced,
unbeaten by the waters' fist.
The hawk that staggers from the sky,
the roe and doe the rivers drown,
are jealous of tranquillity,

of this harbouring glass and stone.
But roofed from iron sting of rain
is cut from clear and fecund sun.
And shut from sharpness of the wind
is severed from the human touch.

III

I am a man whose love for all the people
like a rock interrupts an easy ripple.
I have five wounds are hidden where I walk;
I have the accent of a foreign speech;
I'm at the dance the uninvited guest,
the unasked stranger who is not absent,
the fellow no one knows, but is present.
Expatriate in the region of his birth,
and ordinary only in his death.
My sorrow is my tears: my tears are time:
my voices are my speech: man is my talk.
I am the man is poverty's distress,
Dives drowning with the gold upon his chest.
I have too much, and not enough.
Notched like an ox with the five wounds of love.

LOUIS ADEANE

Epitaph

'Oh waiting with an infinite gift,
Which to refuse to search and find
Is to be cold and cruel and blind.'
—SPENDER.

Now your dark hair falls back, the pressing hands
Are folded into memories and put away
In that black box I found upon the sands
And carry ever since from day to day.

I shall remember how your beggared eyes
Stared at the walls of your white sunken room;
The bright electric light, the loving lies
Murmured with music from the neighbouring tomb,

And how that light burns silent while you walk
Lonely even in dreams, and how you weep
Unwanted mother in the childhood dark,
And how you left your voice behind in sleep.

If I set down my treasured dread one day,
Opened the lid, and woke you with the sun,
Would you stand on that crimson sand and say
'I am your soul, what murder have you done?'

ALEX COMFORT

Notes for My Son

Remember, when you hear them beginning to say Freedom—
Look round you: see who it is that they want you to butcher.

Remember, when you say that the old trick would never have fooled you
That every time it is the trick that seems new.

Remember, the smell of burning will not sicken you
If they have convinced you that it will thaw the world.

Remember, the blood of a child does not smell so bitter
If you have shed it with a high moral purpose.

Remember, remember their faces—watch them carefully
For every step you take is on someone's body

And every tree you plant for them is a gibbet
and every furrow you turn for them is a grave.

So that because a woodcutter disobeyed
They will not burn her today nor any day

So that for lack of a joiner's obedience
The crucifixion will not now take place

So that when they come to sell you their bloody corruption
You will lift the spit of your chest
And plant it in their faces.

RUTHVEN TODD

To a Very Beautiful Lady

FOR U.B.

And when you walk the world lifts up its head,
Planet are haloed by the unembarrassed stars,
The town lies fallow at your feet, the ancient dead
Recall their loves, their queens and emperors,
Their shepherds and the quiet pastoral scene.
For less than you Troy burned and Egypt fell,
The corn was blasted while it still stood green,
And Faustus went protesting into Hell.

Be careful, sweet, adored by half the world,
Time to its darlings is not always kind,
There lie the lovelies whom the years have scored
Deeper than all the hearts which once repined.
The knife you hold could cut an empire low
Or in your own breast place the suicidal blow.

Love Poem to Accompaniment of Rockets

FOR M.

Throughout this night whose evil is made worse
By the toy hornets of the mad mechanic's brain,
My happiness survives the gambler's curse,
Risking the ace that will not turn again.

O Phœnix from the ashes of my past,
Time cannot injure you who rule as queen,
Who hold my heart as tower against the blast
Of all the cruelty and the horror which has been,

Who walk this world with tenderness and laughter,
With such delight in living and such grace.
I lie awake and wish, come what may after,
Your tousled hair lay close against my face.

That you ruled more than just my heart's extent;
Wish that the evil which silts up like snow,
Crystals of terror, of hatred and of discontent,
Be something which your mind will never know;

Wish that the words I write would praise
You with perfection never reached before,
That from the world's hurry I could steal the days
To learn the skill to shew how I adore:

And, O my girl of honey in the mad world's welter,
My love sprouts quietly in the noisy night,
Grows like a tree across my heart to shelter
The lonely lost bloom flowering in a world of fright.

DEREK STANFORD

This Voice, This River, This Midnight

FOR ARTHUR FORD

Stillness descended like a dark bird's flight
out of the casual, careless zone of play;
I heard a voice faint as the flight of a moth,
dim as a lantern in the far-away. . . .
I heard a voice speaking so close to my ear
it seemed my shut mouth dumbly moved in speech;
I heard my bitten tongue articulate
with automatic urgence through clenched teeth:

'See, we have come to the ultimate ancient stair;
another pace and the stone slips under water,
another step and the moss becomes waving weed,
the green of slime, of frogs, of suicide.
The river slides along like perpetual glass:
above is the churchyard with the sunken graves
by way of which we came, and may return—
unless we dare the oarless midnight ferry. . . .
Do you recall our painful coming here;
our knee-deep wandering in the burial grass
where even the bumbling bee in pollened May
intoned its heavy summer obsequies?

Do you recall how the angels drooped in the haze
of earth miasmas which the sun dispelled;
how brightness warmed their white forms till the clouds
caused them to weep under umbrellas of shade?
We thought to see their hair turn gold again
but sunlight left unchanged their frigid stance.
Stumbling on, we came to an open tomb,
entered, and found these subterranean stairs;
and here we stand where water laps our feet,
and the fishes lisp the scandals of the dead.
On the further bank the silver orchards bloom,
the fountains pray to the moon, and the seven stars
signal all night to the forget-me-nots.
There the soft tumble of the waterfall
re-echoes the constellations in its foam.
There you may venture as the spirit moves;
there you may find your heaven, your hell, your home.'

The voice has stopped; the ferry rocks on the tide:
midnight hangs over my head and the waterside.

SYLVIA READ

The Pool of Bethesda

By the iron water of an unstirred pool
The hopeless wait, the men with pronged hands,
And women whose stubbed fingers cannot caress.
Their time is hard, hard as a metal gong
To dinner calling, to the poisonous feast.

Here pass the hours, the spoilt unnamed procession
Filing by eyes corroding time and space.
The angel comes to them, to him, to you;
Monsters and jackals keep their customed place
Who know why they are here, what they must do.

Trouble the waters, trouble the placid curse,
Break our smooth ways, disturb us, wreck our peace;
The coils of lying kiss us evenly,
And bland envy smiles with a charmed face.
We are the undisturbed who die serenely

Losing our limbs, our taste, our sight of angels.
We have forgotten how the sun comes up
Over our souls enlarging their good seeds,
We have forgotten the wind's astringent touch
Blowing us naked, stripping us of our creeds.

Angel we do not expect a consolation,
Neither a blessing nor feast of heart forgiven,
We have no prayers to make for sanctuary,
We have no hopes of a light way to heaven;
Disturb us then, trouble our luxury.

The metal water stirs with explosive heads,
Its gun's mouths spitting out a violent charge.
The tide's blood hot, the rage of water falls
On sores, and scars, distortion, and the large
Demented crying heart of criminals.

The water seethes in iron. 'Angel we wait,
Uncertain of the miracle, afraid to fall
From the high sides of our security.
We have had ease here, we have been comfortable;
Delay the deed for us. Grant us thy pity.'

Take up your bed; lift up the heavy comfort,
Your hours of sleep, your turgid dreams of noon,
The world will rest you, rock you, bind you, kill you.
I give you a sword, that is my desperate boon;
Not ease, but after battle, peace shall still you.

ROY McFADDEN

Letter to an Irish Novelist

FOR MICHAEL McLAVERTY

In all of us the worm eats at the heart
And the rot spreads. But you are whole, your pen
A plough knifing straight furrows in firm ground,
Your hills and valleys clear against the sky,
Your fields secure, your people hard like buds
Opening to your fingers, the flower within.

Even this city reveals dignity,
Turning a startled face from history.
If you ignore the adolescent dream,
The raised fists of the mob, the tumbled bed,
It is because, knowing your pattern's form,
You choose the threads. Even this country fails
To blow your petalled purpose into grass,
Or drown you in a puddle's politics.

The Irish are not always fortunate:
I think of someone, mutually known,
Complacent as a thrush hatching out song,
Serener in his tree than on the road
Where wheels crash in the head and beggars' hands
Sprout from the shadows; and of that other, who
Talks of the revolution from a chair,
Stroking his stomach; and of that sad man
Walking in mountains, gnarled with bitterness
At missing greatness (the erratic bus).

And then I think of Ireland: of blue roads
Spanning like fingers to its four loud seas,
The fields whose soil is history, rich with bones
Of likely men whose minds had one stern skyline.
Let us have done with ranting in this place.
Remembering the best, the rarer ones,
Let us refine the mind to the tight flame,
The luminous leaf, their aristocracy,
The deepest mark of Yeats's Irishry.
What is an accent if the mind is blind?

We who have lost a country, with a wound
In place of patria, can sail like winds
Into the anchorage of Europe, free
Adventurers, raising our private flags,
Stung by the wound to travel several seas,
Seeking no permanent harbour, fortunate
In being ourselves, each with his personal war.

And we have charts and compasses, for some
Have made the voyage out before our time,
Meeting tall seas and fangs of submarines,
Tossed from coasts' to coasts' hostility,
Their accent foreign and their flags suspect.
Some received an ocean burial,
Having lost sight of continents too long,
Crazed by an endless emptiness of time,
Salt searing the swollen mind to madness.

We shall be wary then, and weatherwise,
Testing our strength of sail, learning the ways
Of the dark currents singing in the rocks,
And the exotic dreams that come from thirst
And too much loneliness on the world's edge,
The fears of mutiny and the dark hold,
The shark's mouth at the heels, the drifting mines.

In time the navigator finds his course,
And builds a continent. And then the horde
Of trade spews after, well equipped with flags
And God for the poor natives. How can he
Protect himself and the important fields
From these shark-fashioned mouths? The waiting seas
Stand as his acres, his horizon God.

HARDIMAN SCOTT

Crucifixion

The times are not dissimilar, bearing
Devious the suffering that you bore,
That the prophetic stars told, and sages

Read unwisely, seeing distinction in birth.
Even the womb-wept blood bringing your life
Made fertile the young graves of Bethlehem.

Even the singing star was cruciform
With sorrow, its suffering light to pierce
Centuries bravely but unavailingly.

You, who differed so little from others
In whom the End shone forth like a flower,
So unmistakably beautiful

And yet so difficult; who never tired
To show the colour of the root, more pale
In the petals' expressive splendour;

You for whom truth grew thorns and flowed silver
In another's watered blood; for whom love
Brought out a scarlet robe and mocking birds—

From wine you spoke a mystic abstinence.
The sorrow of devouring years achieved
The vaguest apogee of man, and yet

Setting its sun within your heart, knew all.
Then a cock drowned love with Peter's weeping,
And silver wove a rope to hang a man.

From the hollow skull they offered you gall,
And in the silent helix of despair,
Truth, in your eyes, its tragic apex made.

No, the times are not dissimilar,
But the pattern different in the brains
Of soldiers, for whom sorrow is in the heart

Like a heavy cross but knowing less;
Who see the unmistakably beautiful,
The sun-weaned flower, but not the sun-white root;

For whom love has other associations,
And truth turns on many tongues for any
Loyalties that glitter the pence of heaven.

This suffering flows to its lowest ebb
And no tides turn to moon's revelation.
Cruciform upon a European shore

This soldier dies, and blood from the hollow skull
Gives gall. O Christ, still your lips are dry, since
From wine you spoke a mystic abstinence.

DENISE LEVERTOFF

To The Inviolable Shade

Intimate trivial glow of cigarettes
illumines now the soft striated smoke
gently rising; and murder overhead
knocks at our hearts like an impatient ghost
that batters windowpanes on stormy nights.
Incredible threats grown near as a raised hand
startle familiar dreams to dreaming life,
love on your lips a miracle, and words
magical flowers that bend bright heads to earth.
'Where is tomorrow?' says the pulse of darkness,
'but in the chance fall of a tossed coin?
Time is not master of felicity.'
The pain of the world is in the air we breathe:
you who took stars and sorrow in white arms,
tender satirical lover of the lost,
no pain but your loss can darken all my world.

HOWARD SERGEANT

Though they speak with the Tongues of Men . . .

Now the centuries bring tears and years their fury
to our awareness, consider the plausible voices—
birds, words, and angel-tongues adopt the same
suave tendency to emulate the graces
of a fertile season. What milk-and-honey reasons
can they find to conjure faith in us, to whom
life has already opened inescapable horizons
and montaged the fabian myths infesting history?
Dare we accept clockwork edens they discover
who utter not heart's language, nor can they ever?

O, here is the picnic hour of charlatan voice,
and the lay voice, and revelation of lovers
plying their shuttlecock dreams on salvers of pain.
In this forest tongues flourish but no leaf delivers
our song from the wrackround peninsula, and trees
we touch sprout thorn, are ivied over and aspen
to all hope. How can they build, these strawless, the pharaohs?
Only the earth is real; in our roots the promise.
So thimble your motives and sleep, soldier, in slaughter:
let no parochial wind ruffle mind's clear water.

J. B. PICK

Childhood

TO MY WIFE

It is sad, I had thought,
Having no sail of return to childhood islands,
There in the pools to bathe—pools pearled
With fishes and the shells of innocence—
O those are under the waves,
Only the seeds, no scenes, retained;
And now this written desolation,
Spider writing over the suffering eyes.

This but blindness: you are the baking bread,
The pools of childhood,
Quiet flowers and mind's regeneration,
Implications of a rooted song,
Grasses soothing the nervous head,
The purity of honest flesh,
The blessing laid on further word.

G. A. WAGNER

Ave Maria Della Stella

Festival of the Blessed Virgin Mary at Easter

Summer broke sudden through thunder
Splashing the old ground under
The feet with ceremony. Girls swung
Their legs about, heat slapped each young
And clinging face as children
With busy palms tried to open

The world. Floating in the acrid
Smell of incense you fetched
Your lady down from the monastery.
Did she contemplate your misery?
Did she conjure from your song
The antiphonal lightning

That struck the procession
Of the evening with darkness? Then
The gay day was drowned.
O Mary of the stars you must have frowned
Expecting something consequential,
Some pharos of fireworks to light your hill.

Only beyond the town someone heard
A sighing as if a great bird
Had dropped from Mars to try
To solve our danger, and a cry
Closed the day, a voice shouting
To Vesuvius, 'Wait, wait, I am coming.'

MURIEL GRAINGER

The Glass Trees

In a cycle of fog-bound and colourless winters,
One only the memory keeps as a treasure—
The year that the sea-foam lay frozen on beaches;
The year the trees tinkled like Japanese wind-bells,
With shooting stars falling through branches like blossoms—
Imprisoned in ice as though sculptured in glass.

O strange glass trees, your brittle loveliness
In moonlight, was not of this world at all.
But I, like you, was ice-bound, passing by
Without interpreting, and only now,
Long afterwards, it cracks about my heart,
And meaning feels its way along my blood.
The curled leaves loosen at the hint of Spring,
Sap-warm with promise of what is to come.

O Watch the Bright Fish . . .

O watch the bright fish flash and quiver,
Meet to retreat
Or dart apart,
Net-enmeshed, then lost for ever.

O see the tree's bird-bearing branches
Swing with singing,
Then still at the will
Of suddenly shy and silent finches.

O feel the new thoughts stir and waken,
Tremble; assemble.
But the mind finds
They die, as the living word is spoken.

JANE-ELIZA HASTED

Sonnet

The dusty loveliness of living things,
    The woven and dependent tapestry,
The borrowing and the lending phantasy,
The green bird and the tree that sings,
Dropped cones that lend the water ripple-rings—
    All these for all they take give graciously.
    So, in the fashion of a broidery
Are interwoven buds and feet and wings.

So are we not. So all unlike are we,
    Disharmonised, a company of clowns,
Mocking the heritage the years set free,
    Making with hells of huddled houses towns,
Leaving least loveliness where most we pass,
Nor learning yet the wisdom of the grass.

CHARLES FOX

Ballet Matinée at Bournemouth

I stood in the foyer watching them come in;
through the arched doorways the sun was bright outside,
the hotel front opposite splashed with clean milk.
Inside it seemed dark, but here and there smooth faces
were rimmed with light, opalescent, and I saw
they were made of glass.

Each one separate, fragile, bearing itself
hesitantly, as if barefooted on a shingly shore.
Finely-blown some, others scarred and cracked
or chipped, while some were stained—a dirty
viscous stain that crept like a jealous thought.
As I looked I could see right through them

and it seemed as though they had no entrails,
just shining glass, translucent guts.
Crystal bowls were the heads, each one proclaiming
panacea for the future, but all different,
and as I stared the crystals clouded,
like swirling smoke, and changed.

Brittle was their talk, the chafing legs of
grasshoppers in tangled weed.
I had not known there were so many,
and yet they were not a crowd, each one was so remote,
guarding his crystal dream,
for beneath each breast I saw no heart.

The bowl poised on a tapering stem can fall
so easily, and in falling be smashed, and what
is left but a few sharp chips upon the floor
and the scattered curds of intellect.
Lights lowered the figures moved upon the stage
creating reality with a subtle gesture.

Drumming above the music came the pulse-throb
as for a brief span glass was turned to flesh,
the head forgotten while the navel tingled.
Outside the sunlight glanced off the smooth
hard limbs as frigidity returned
and the crystal bowls mirrowed the sky.

NOTE

We remind our readers that we are offering a first prize of five guineas, a second prize of three guineas, and a third of a guinea for the best poem in the four last issues, including this one, that is Winter 1943, Spring, Summer and Autumn 1944. A consolation prize of any book published by *The Grey Walls Press* will be given also. Subscribers and anyone who has read the four issues should send in his or her choice of one poem only to this office by November 15th. The result will be published in the Spring-Winter number appearing on January 1st, 1945.

IN DEFENCE OF EZRA POUND

Before a young poet with a permanently restricted talent briefs himself in the defence of one who (after everyone has had his say) must still be acknowledged as one of the most important poets working in this language in our time, he owes it to the prosecution to present the jury with some hard new evidence.

The factual basis of one's emotional defence of Pound rests on the assumption that he is a real poet, and that real poetry is so rare that one has to take whatever other ingredients get mixed up with it. An artist tends to lean either towards authority or towards anarchy. Pound picked a bad authority because all contemporary authority is bad.

One admits that where he is on the side of those gas vans in the main streets of Kharkov. But let us examine his behaviour. One admits the facts: the terrible fact of his anti-Semitism, the stupid fact that he tried to prop up the shanty balcony of Mussolini with the sound architecture of Jefferson's thinking.

But Pound has gotten no material advantage out of Fascism. His chair at an Italian University was comparable, I suppose, to a British Council job in Belgrade. An anthology he edited included Louis Aragon's great poem on the U.S.S.R. He held these views ten years before Mussolini came to power. He has lived in Italy and out of America for a lifetime. He didn't change sides when his was losing. He came out into the open and fought for what he believed. His behaviour then (not his ideas) has had more dignity about it than that of many Left Wing intellectuals, here and on the Continent, who, believing in the half-truth for which we are fighting, absented themselves from the war zone.

One excuses Pound's politics partly because of the frightening fascism which the intellectual Left display in their personal relations. He has great allies in men who abhor his politics, and whose own politics differ from each other—T. S. Eliot, Hugh MacDiarmid, Dylan Thomas, and, I believe, Sean O'Casey.

One does not know who will defend him before an Eisenhower court martial representing a State that has almost killed its republic, insulted the Declaration of Independence, and turned the Gettysburg address into a pipe dream—remember, they will shoot him not for being a Fascist and a Jew-baiter, but merely for being a traitor to a country of which he is but nominally the citizen. But it does not need the gifted fantasy of a Disney to realize that Ignazio Silone might gladly leave the T.B. Sanatorium where he is forced to live

to defend, before a tribunal of the Italian Socialist Republic, one who, in a poem about a London park, noticed the dirty laughing children of the very poor, and prayed that they might inherit the earth. And, have you read the pact he made with Walt Whitman?

Unfortunately I lack the equipment to penetrate into the reasons why writers of the calibre of Pound, Celine, Roy Campbell, de Monthelant, Wyndham Lewis and Yeats, during a period when if one side is not wholly in the right, its enemies are most certainly completely wrong, have sided with those enemies and their gas vans and concentration camps. Neither do I possess that critical faculty to prove the importance of Pound's contribution to the poetry of this period. But I do own a hunger for beauty, a taste for greatness and a thirst for simplicity, all of which are alleviated by reading his verse. For a reasoned, unprejudiced critical valuation of the work of Ezra Pound, I recommend a re-reading of T. S. Eliot's preface to his selected 'Poems' (Faber & Faber). Men only remember the lasting friendship of these two poets—they forget the high value and deep importance that Eliot attaches to Pound's work. It is good that friendship should be deemed more worthy of remembrance than a critical opinion, but those who disagree with Pound's political career are trying to disguise the fact that their behaviour has in part been responsible for it, by attacking his verse and denying its importance.

If one had only been allowed to read Pound on the B.B.C., then over the hurting streets of Europe that night, there would have been a fight waged between two sets of words—Pound versus Pound—words—some of which I will quote in the next paragraph, that he had pruned and carved and worked upon for years—against another set of words, that had not been matured by long years of residence in his heart and in his head.

What would this gentle piercing description of a delicate woman sound like to the men who have killed whole communities of women from Assisi to Kiev:

> '*She who could never live save through one person*
> *She who could never speak save to one person*
> *And all the rest of her a shifting change*
> *A broken bundle of mirrors.*'

Does this next poem strike you as being anti-American, against the America of Jefferson and Melville and Emerson I mean, not the America of Tammy Hall and Herbert Hoover, and perhaps Thomas Dewey:

'I make a pact with you, Walt Whitman
I have detested you long enough
I come to you as a grown child
Who has had a pig-headed father
I am old enough to make friends
It was you who broke the new wood
Now is a time for carving
We have one sap and one root
Let there be commerce between us.'

While in his poem about Kensington Gardens, a knowledge of class differences and an understanding of both sides mingle with the poet's bottom dollar being laid on the side of the future inheritors of the earth. In these hard, still lines of quiet and English verse there is an analysis of the human ditch more penetrating than the 48 pages of many political pamphlets. Yes:

'I walk through the London streets
Talking young poems aloud
I answer the taxi's horn
By a verse from the Mauberley
"When our two dusts with Waller's shall be laid"
This is not part of my folly
I'm seriously trying to claim
You, for the world and the sane.'

Throughout history great writers have tended to be interested either in some specific fundamental principle of human behaviour (Strindberg in men dominating women; Robinson Jeffers, in incest), or in the general idea of human progress (Ibsen, Whitman), the two seldom are found together. Writers who lean towards authority have been unlucky in the present period—as all contemporary authority is contemptible, how else could it be in a world where men eat in the Corner House, make love in the Regent Palace Hotel, and mistake Joad for a philosopher? Eliot's authority, the Church and the monarchy, are not in fact really current, they carry no real power in modern Europe. It is not correct, either, to think that Catholicism and fascism are political twins. Neither Pound nor Yeats are any kind of catholic, and not even the ex-secretary of the now disbanded anti-God society could get away with calling Pius X a fascist. While more recently men will remember Cardinal Suhard, Primate of France, and his walk through the streets of Nazi-occupied Paris wearing the Star of David pinned on to his cardinal's cape. Perhaps the reason for Pound's seemingly

unexplainable behaviour can be found in Julian Benda's 'Trahison des Clerics'.

Technically, of course, according to the laws of decent human society, Pound can be executed quite legally as a traitor to his country. Morally, he has sided not only with the enemies of the allies, but with three countries, the governments and agents of which have believed in a manner that without the rhetoric of a politician's lie is quite physically beyond the borders of a modicum of ordinary human decency. Yet, and this is as impossible to explain, as it is impossible to ignore—that there is something in human poetry beyond all laws, all rules, and all conventions. Put it this way—a catholic believes that a priest has the power to change bread, during Mass, into the body of Christ. Don't bother here whether you believe it or not. The point is, he believes that any priest can do it, whether that priest be Saint John of the Cross or a little fascist bureaucrat suck holing to a 'Franco captain'. If a policeman can enjoy Villon without bothering about his being a thief, a socialist should also enjoy Pound without letting his anti-Semitism spoil the Cantos.

Much has been said against Pound's scholarship—Pound has the learning of all true poets: he knows the ideas, not the facts.

Men who have never read his verse are thirsting for his blood, but if the U.S. military authorities do execute him, all one's instincts will rush uselessly to his defence, and men will feel a deep sense of futility as if a bren-gun had been used to kill a leaf.

PAUL POTTS

MUSIC AND POETRY

Opportunity is provided for the appreciation of music and poetry under unusually favourable and intimate conditions at the Ethical Church Hall, 4A, Inverness Place, Queen's Way, Bayswater, on the third Monday of every month. Tea, 6 p.m. Music and poetry, 6.45 p.m.

Herbert Read will be among the readers on October 16th, Alex Comfort on November 20th.

Poets desiring to read their own work should communicate in advance with Alec Craig, 59, Oakwood Road, Bricket Wood, Herts.

Everyone is welcome to come and listen.

REVIEWS

Ed. by KEIDRYCH RHYS, *Modern Welsh Poetry* (Faber, 6s.); NINA CUST, *Not All the Sun* (Nicholson & Watson, 6s.).

Editors of poetry magazines can hardly fail to appreciate the *affaire* Ern Malley. I think it the most salutary event in poetry publishing for a long while. Two Australian students concocted a bogus poet out of collage from dictionaries and reports on pest control and sold it to editors and critics. Well and good. The joke slipped a little when its authors said that the butt was intended to be Treece and the Apocalypse, a remark which suggests they had not read his work: Ern Malley read like a bad imitation of Empson, and suggested Treece about as much as it suggested Yeats: the principle was sound, however, and even if it gave encouragement to the Kulturbolschewismus party over here, it showed up a literary charlatan and was worth the trouble for that alone. However, even if the jokers had not read Treece, they might well have read some of the contributors to this Welsh book.

The Welsh contribution to modern poetry has been so immense, and the number of talented poets whom one finds, without having suspected it, to be Welshmen, is so large, that the badness of this collection is all the more striking. It gives us nobody and nothing which is new. The significant writer—Rhys himself, the only important realist of the war, Treece, Dylan Thomas, Ormond Thomas, Watkins, Lewis—sticks up like Snowdon out of a welter of pretentious rot. I think that the only little-known poets whose lack of following this anthology makes one regret are Idris Davies and David Jones (the second, too, not at his best). What the hell is one to do with:

> '*Hand me the comet lashing with*
> *Groans of desire*
> *Upon the aching lips of the bloodbath*
> *On the wheeling mount. . . .*'

I had sooner hear Lady my brach howl in Irish. The productions of Aberpennar in particular underline a fact of literary history—the disastrous influence of talented writers. Thomas and Treece in particular have a following of bad imitators who inherit only bombast and mystification without the poetic energy of the originals. Aberpennar is another Ern Malley, but unfortunately in earnest. Prichard is another:

A thunder and a whirlwind pluck out the eyestone
He humbles out, not lily from the grave,
But ash-touching cerements shedding green meteors
Of glowworms from his shoulders and his starbound head. . . .'

There are several poetic valetudinarians who seem to have dropped out of 'Poetry Review.' I think Rhys has failed here by his desire to include too many Welshmen. By the yardstick of his own superb 'Death of a Hurricane Pilot,' or any of Thomas's or Treece's work, he ought to be able to measure off sprats which should be thrown back in the sea. It is the excellence of the best of this new Welsh tradition which shows up the second-rate material so badly.

'I write these words,' says Mrs. Cust, 'and boggle over a rhyme Just to get through One lonely jot of time.' The only serious problem this book raises is that of the responsibility of publishers who, when Yeats is out of print by reason of paper shortage, devote precious material and the time and energy of binders of work so nugatory that even the author's family will hardly buy it.

ALEX COMFORT

FREDERIC PROKOSCH, *Chosen Poems* (Chatto & Windus, 6s.); JOHN BAYLISS, *The White Knight* (Fortune Press, 6s.); ALEX COMFORT, *Elegies* (Routledge, 5s.).

This nicely produced volume contains the cream of the poems of Mr. Prokosch, the *crème de la crème*, as it were: Schlagobers and Rosenkavalier and Salzburg, the Acropolis, Storm over Asia, the Danube and Paris, The New Yorker. It is a Cook's Tour with a guide who is handsome, well-brought-up and a wonderful conversationalist. It is the rich man's winter residence on the Riviera, the in-between's holiday in Ostend, the poor man's annual visit to the pantomime. Do lines as these evoke nostalgia in you?

'Listen, the rhythms of the night begin:
the little lamps are flickering in the inn.
Out through the door into the garden glides
the fretful elegance of the mandolin.'

Then Mr. Prokosch is your poet: the Auden of 'Lay Your Sleeping Head, My Love' overwhelmed by 'Bitter Sweet'; the poet for romantic moods, when

'through our blood
saunter the fugue, the carnival and love.'

And there is no hangover, Mr. Prokosch having served sandwiches with the drinks: an interlude of Beveridge between the 'Kleine Nachtmusik' and Sablon's crooning.

I hope these somewhat haphazard sentences indicate that I, for one, find the poetry of Mr. Prokosch highly satisfying. I admire him for his success with hackneyed words like 'pastoral' and 'golden', and with thick layers of flamboyant names, his happy-go-lucky adjectives (*Hamlet knew it, and the asthmatic Frenchman*), the way many of his poems leave one high and dry with nothing worth mentioning—'Sunburned Ulysses,' for instance—and yet curiously elated; his exciting titles; his first lines:

'*Music, the lion, the legendary day,*'

or

'*Under the leafless arches*
their bleeding faces move,'

impelling one to read on; his use of repetitions, sometimes seemingly miraculous, as in '*Pears from their boughs hung golden*', at others bathetic:

'*Listen! Is that music*
Approaching? Are we free?
Ambiguous music, leaf upon golden leaf,
Grain upon grain of dust move through the air.'

Mr. Bayliss is plagued by the idea that it is essential for him to simplify his poetry until it has become *intelligible to people of normal intelligence*, to *a wider public* than *the few intellectuals* provide. One can sympathize with him, because it has its basis in that feeling of futility caused by the stock question: 'Are you one of those Modern poets?' But he should realize how that idea can endanger his work: surely he does not need anyone to tell him that so long as his wider public reads verse at all, it will choose Ella Wheeler Wilcox and not Hopkins, A. P. Herbert and not Gascoyne, and that the opinions of his 'few intellectuals'—who are not so few and not always so incapable of emotion as he suggests—are important enough to compensate for the loss of cash customers: or is he that exceptional person, the poet who thinks he can live by selling his poetry?

This compromise of a book—to Mr. Bayliss it is a *fusion of intellect with emotion*—cannot be criticized according to his claim that he is writing at the *beginning of a revival of poetry*, but, in fairness to him, he is not the only one building a cardboard house in that cul-de-sac: the new political coupleteers, the amateur epicists, the many who are prospective poets but overwhelmed by

the thought of masses hollering their words, masses not switching off the wireless because what they hear almost makes sense to them and sounds pretty, anyway; the many who keep kidding themselves that their wide public cares two brass farthings for poetry, or can be made to care: Mr. Bayliss's preface is uncannily, revealingly characteristic of that moonlight-and-roses attitude, and therefore deserves more careful examination than I can give it here, or than the resultant poetry. Nasty as that may sound, it is true: this collection is little more than pleasant pastiche full of good intention, and he is likely to regret its publication once he recollects his critical judgment and unusual intelligence.

And yet I cannot help admiring him for attempting to please the contemporary multitude without offending the knowledgeable: an undertaking in which, according to my buffoon of a memory, extraordinarily few people have ever succeeded. If I called his book a collection of pastiche, let me qualify that now by saying that I have no doubt at all Mr. Bayliss will eventually write a book of poetry. He will reach that miraculous goal as soon as he jumps off his rocking horse of (to use Maurice Bowra's phrase) 'frigid morality and trite rhetoric', which gets his 'Testament and Prophecy', for instance, nowhere in a rush of energy; many of his lyrics are spoiled because of his straining for a moral suitable to poets. And he would be helped in his ascent from low-level simplification if he were to overcome the annoying habit of naming colours so frequently as to create an effect of insufficiency of imagination.

Mr. Comfort's is a book which repays long and careful study: a tremendous advance on his first collection, it is the sort of achievement for which a number of young poets are heading, only to loiter too long in the halfway house of Mr. Bayliss.

Unlike his fellow-editor, Mr. Comfort does not list the poets who have influenced him, and quite right, too; for while it is not difficult to name some of his poetic visitors—Eliot, Read, Ady, Aragon, Marnau, Patchen have recently left cards—the structure of his verse is too complex for easy parallels with this or that poet to be drawn. It would, in any case, be pointless to do so since the influences are so well assimilated as to make Mr. Comfort one of that outstanding handful of young writers, able to overcome the poetic freaks of war, party politics and overstressed, cloying nationalism, and living up to the dictum of Novalis, that 'by bestowing greater importance, a hidden reflection on the ordinary, the dignity of the unknown on the known, the glory of infinity on the constricted, I romanticize it'.

There are some weaknesses in the book. That one of the group

of short poems leaves me not merely cold but rather embarrassed may be the fault, not of Comfort, but of my somewhat earthbound taste; but the occasional echoes of insincerity about his country images must surely be audible to others as well. I can give no real reason for them—the impregnable Big City Background perhaps?—the fact remains that passages like:

> '*The shadows of birds and their small bright mouths*
> *leap over woods that part the bending rivers,*'

seem incongruous in their context, bits of Sir William Beach-Thomas tagged on to The Politics of the Unpolitical. But this weakness will surely pass with greater maturity; in any case, it is a little thing in a poet singular enough to speak for most of us:

> '*And still the winds of Europe blow in my mind*
> *I have seen the endless faces, the faces of friends*
> *crossing dry plains under the swinging hills*
> *the carts moving—women's terrified faces*
> *the carts moving under an empty sky.*'

I urge you most strongly to buy this book, so individual and yet completely conscious of contemporary life, so independent and yet impossible without any of its literary ancestors.

Moral footnote: It pleases me to know that this review will not appear anonymously: any wrath it may cause in anybody will naturally descend on me—Mr. Bayliss will have the satisfaction of knowing that *The Times* praised where Sigler was snooty; and Mr. Comfort will have to remember that, although Sigler searched for superlatives, the more august of the two bodies, having considered him in all its nameless majesty, has found him wanting. There must be a moral in that somewhere.

ERNST SIGLER

NORMAN NICHOLSON, *Five Rivers* (Faber & Faber, 6s. net); E. J. SCOVELL, *Shadows of Chrysanthemums* (Routledge, 5s. net); LEONARD CLARK, *Passage to the Pole* (Fortune Press, 6s. net); ROBERT GREACEN, *One Recent Evening* (Resurgam Books, 2s.).

The make-up of Norman Nicholson's new work, *Five Rivers*, reminds me of certain seventeenth century poets, such as Herrick, who divided their books into sacred and profane 'numbers'. The parallel, I feel, is more than a surface one. Again, to apply two categories which Kierkegaard distinguished,

we may say that in Mr. Nicholson we find both the poetry of 'the religious' and 'the interesting'. By the latter epithet Kierkegaard intended to describe lively and intriguing mental activity, devoid, however, of universal significance; unsubordinated to an ultimate purpose. In the verses within this book these two kinds of activity are sometimes synchronized. The religious situations are 'interestingly' presented; and here Mr. Nicholson is like a trick photographer, who has discovered a new angle, a novel slant for an old subject. The result is that these poems strikingly avoid banal religiosity, both of sentiment and idiom.

Of three young poets of our time—Anne Ridler, David Gascoyne, and Norman Nicholson—who have treated of religious situations and experience, the first we may say has realized certain Christian implications in a quotidian way—for purposes of 'the daily round' and 'common task'; the second an emotional sense of tragedy and sin—a sense of 'crisis' as Karl Barth terms it; the third, our present study, possessed of a doctrinal sense, has expressed in the stuff of poetry much of Christian parable and polemic

'The Garden of the Innocent,' described by one critic as one of the most interesting long poems of today, is a drama, adventure and sermon in one. 'The High Mountain', another long poem, rather fails to realize this threefold achievement. Among the 'profane' verses of this book the regional poems are the most sustained.

In both kinds of poems Mr. Nicholson succeeds in keeping the surface as sprightly and arresting and attractive as a modern poster. He has a mind that can juxtapose terms which speak of incongruous matter with a kind of wedded poetic congruity:

> '*On quarry walls the spleenwort spreads*
> *Its green zipfasteners and black threads,*
> *And pinches tights its infurled purses*
> *In every crevice with the cresses,*
> *As if a blast of dynamite*
> *Had spattered it upon the slate.*'

Agree or disagree with his sentiments as we will, his wording of them charms and entertains.

The verse of Miss Scovell seems to be written almost entirely out of her sensitivity; out of a kind of gently rarified perceptiveness. There is very little evidence of this work being produced by any instinct to form, and presents practically no deliberate literary architecture at all. These verses would appear to have been composed

by a process of peeling off a transfer which the impression of the subject had ever so delicately printed upon her receptive nerves.

Her choice in subject is often the evanescent; the almost weightless phenomena of life. Compared with her, Geoffrey Grigson is a 'heavy'; his poems as solid and matter-of-fact as bricks. Or to put the matter in correcter focus, seeing them from their respective points of view, Mr. Grigson busies himself with outline while Miss Scovell is concerned with essences.

Miss Scovell's verse often treats its subject in the spirit of the still life, and sometimes in the tremulous contours of her water-colour verse I find myself reminded of a flower painting by the French artist, Odilon Redon, or a picture entitled 'Spring Flowers' by the English contemporary Ivor Hitchens.

It is difficult to quote from these poems where individual lines move faintly to their own incomplete music, merging into the sound of the whole poems like scents of various flowers in a garden border:

> '*The field is bounded by four hedges built of may*
> *Like stone. There, seen or unseen, the blossom given,*
> *Jets out from the deep springs of time all day;*
> *Gone, is replenished. The scent floods for its season.*'

Or this, from a poem entitled 'Autumn Gardens':

> '*The flowers of autumn, the yellow and mauve,*
> *Feed like a fire in a slow stove*
> *On the year's hoarded sun. The flowers and the days*
> *Are warm and fruit-like now.*'

Very occasionally she can speak of a deeper emotion, and present it with a moving directness as in the poem 'A Betrothal':

> '*Put your hand on my heart, say that you love me as*
> *The woods upon the hills cleave to the hills' contours.*
>
> *I will uphold you, trunk and shoot and flowering sheaf,*
> *And I will hold you, root and fruit and fallen leaf.*'

All this is not to say that 'Shadows of Chrysanthemums' is a good book of verse. Very few, in fact, of the poems quite get over. There is always the suggestion of a sentiment or atmosphere; always seed but not always the flower. In many cases the lines are overloaded, and, like a spring-balance, out of adjustment, the expression held in rare tension is lost. Miss Scovell's use of double-barrelled epithets, for the sake of subtler definition, often defeats its purpose, resulting in this.

Nevertheless, Miss Scovell's characteristic—a kind of light-fingered appreciation of the world—makes the reading of this book finely and deftly exciting. There is much in this poetry which is promising: much which requires drawing to a point. We are justified in hoping to see this last inadequacy remedied.

Whatever the merits of the verses in this second book by Leonard Clark as prosody, one value stands out: they are irrefutably written in the speech of sincerity. The urge, the necessity for expression, for projecting some stress of thought and feeling into verbal imagery, bringing by the translation some relief, is everywhere apparent in this book.

The first poem, 'Journey between Two Points', inaugurates our curiosity; generates that sense of crisis, suspense and excitement maintained in all the others:

'*And the room where he stood/On that far-scattered night/With the spring at the turn,/(The years knew the plan/Of the pattern to be)/Has at length found a voice/That was dumb with its hurt,/And cries to the heart/Now emptied and drained,/That all is a piece./And purpose will out.*'

In so far as these poems are regarded as a consistent alphabet for the interpretation of the poet's private emotions no whole single meaning becomes manifest in that the bodies of symbols used vary greatly from poem to poem, and even within individual poems anomolous groups of symbols are sometimes employed. In this latter case the poem, æsthetically speaking, is a failure. Another defect when we regard these verses as style is the literary discrepancy sometimes apparent. For example, the poem 'Petition,' which uses a modern free-verse scheme, contains certain antiquated inversions and antiquated diction such as 'doth.' Another poem, 'Mariner', attempts to beat out its meaning to bad traditional rhyme and metre, aided and abetted by obtuse personification.

Sometimes, too, we may incline to feel there is a little too much of the exile-from-society-retreating-into-nature sentiment, reminiscent of the verse of the Romantic Revival, about Mr. Clark's poetry.

Such poems as 'Abyss', 'The Fortress' and 'Lighthouse,' descriptive of the inner landscapes of the skull, rather after the manner of David Gascoyne, are more unified in their idiom.

The final poem, ostensibly objective, but emanating a strong emotive aroma, suggests the way in which the poet may come to realize in clear, unclouded figures the 'storm and stress' of 'much troublous stuff' within.

Robert Greacen, author of *One Recent Evening*, has some early distinctions already behind him. At Queen's University, Belfast, he edited a magazine of renascence in young Ulster letters, 'The Northman', and various anthologies, including 'Northern Harvest'. He was one of the editors of 'Lyra', a 'representative collection of contemporary verse' published in England. He has also appeared in 'Horizon', 'Modern Reading', 'New English Weekly' and 'Tribune'; and now at the age of twenty-two his verse book of poems comes to us. All this is very active and workmanlike; we enjoy seeing poets who get on with the job, and fresh ardour in a new field is always an inspiriting spectacle. None the less, all is not well. Let us come to the point; the point of quotation:

> '*Now in September, while trees are continent though tired*
> *From summer's steam and storm-wet days of late August,*
> *Now in the soiled end-paper of the season's book*
> *It is opportune to add the double-column entries,*
> *Balance the account of reason, faith and sentiment.*'

Or,

> '*Time, like a crumpled sheet of tin,*
> *Lies unexpressive on the ice*
> *Of faith—that trollop drugged and blind—*
> *Then slips across the surface, light*
> *And hardly felt . . . but leaves her wounds*
> *On faces in the dingy streets.*'

Now there is no lack of virility about these lines (and Blake conceived of energy as beauty); image and sentiment are potent and original; and yet the whole is not bound together: the lines are sometimes like strands of wool, brightly-coloured but out of match. And so the poem is pulled this way and that: no single form is resolved in clarity. Romantic and realistic figure and idiom elbow each other a little rudely. It is simpler, of course, to employ the undivided romantic idiom as Sidney Keyes and John Heath-Stubbs have done, or the realistic idiom after the manner of Julian Symons, than to blend and fuse the two as David Gascoyne does in most of his later work. This difficult synthesis Robert Greacen does not achieve.

None the less, there are exciting poems here—marks of an all-round lively mind.

To offer counsel is so often presumptuous, and yet it is possible that the poet might find much to interest and aid him in returning to a study of the style of Shakespeare—that reconciler of diverse idioms *par excellence*.

DEREK STANFORD

TERENCE TILLER, *The Inward Animal* (Hogarth Press, 3s. 6d.); LAURIE LEE, *The Sun My Monument* (Hogarth Press, 3s. 6d.).

Once a poet makes a declaration about his own work, he does, perhaps, show his courage and help the critic, but, at the same time, he reveals his deficiencies. And this is what Mr. Tiller has done.

In Egypt he has been giving birth to 'something at once myself and a new self and Egypt', and this child, 'hardly brought forth', is the 'inward animal'. It is not a still birth; the infant has emerged all right, but the trouble is that he is rather difficult to recognize. I can sense his gropings, but I don't know what the 'inward animal' really is. This is the deficiency in the book as a whole, and while one gets pictures of Egypt, one doesn't get the underlying feeling of the country in the way that one gets the feeling of the Eastern Mediterranean in Lawrence Durrell's verse. Mr. Tiller should not have suggested that his poems had a spiritual continuity. Read separately, they escape my charge. Most have been pruned of the slight imagiac obscurity of his first volume; but what I would have guessed as an Elizabethan influence in the first book has come into this collection only in such poems as Nos. IV, VI, XXVI, which, to me, are among his best. Here is the first stanza of No. IV:

> *'The silence that I break was more profound,*
> *and purer, sound*
> *—as being absent is a kind*
> *of closer bridal, in the mind.*
> *Nor do my words create*
> *the peace they imitate.'*

Mr. Tiller is extraordinarily good at the purely descriptive. His 'Egyptian Dancer' is vivid, sensuously beautiful, and an example of how form should arise naturally from the necessity of the poem.

Mr. Lee is more interesting. The influence of Spain in general, and Lorca in particular, is so obvious as to be hardly worth recording did it not provide the most important element in his verse. Lorca's imagery was intrinsically Spanish. Mr. Lee has tried to use a similar imagery in English verse and to give it an English significance. He has succeeded, and the result is an originality of image that makes the words sing like violins. He is pre-eminently a singer, and the sound of words is important to him. Like his images, they are fresh and carefully chosen, and he sings best of all of love:

'*But, as my floating senses*
calm down the airs around you
and from these scattered visions
your virtues recollect,
then like a flock of starlings
migrating to their branches
the minutes dress you with your name
and me with leaves of love again.

or,

'*I hear the girl beside me rock*
the hammock of her blood
and breathe upon the bedroom walls
white dust of Christmas roses.'

And here, the sense of breathlessness and final discord in the last line that he so effectively inherits from Lorca:

'*Oh, larch tree, with icy hair*
your needles thread the thoughts of snow
while in the fields a shivering girl
takes to her breasts the sad ripe apples.'

Yes, he has succeeded, and his lyrics show a craftsmanship and care for words as well as for æsthetic unity which is absent in much modern verse.

HARDIMAN SCOTT

PAUL ELUARD, *Poésie et Verité* (London Gallery Editions, 7s. 6d.); E. L. MESENS, *Third Front* (London Gallery Editions, 7s. 6d.).

Eluard's excellence is not only that of craftsmanship and personal integrity—these poems have a quality of proverb, of speaking for everyone and crystallising the times, which only Yeats and Eliot have been able to reach. This poetry of explicit statement:

'*Le temps ne pèse que les fous*
L'abîme est seul à verdoyer
et les sages sont ridicules. . . .'

'*La douce chatte installée dans la vie*
comme une perle dans sa coquille
la douce chatte a mangé ses petits. . . .'

is almost intolerably true, and combined with the terrific zest and fire of Eluard's aspiratory or denunciatory work its immediate effect on me is to make me wish to write something like it, equally true and universal. This book of poems is quite one of the most outstanding which has appeared since the war. Its interest is freedom, not kitsch-liberation, and accordingly it will offend almost everyone, French, German and English, but I doubt if that will diminish its influence on new writers as one more addition to the library of independent opponents of the Good Citizens:

'C'est entendu que je hais le règne des bourgeois
le règne des flics et des prêtres
mais je hais plus encore l'homme qui ne les hait pas
comme moi
de toutes ses forces. . . .'

Mesens shows himself a pretty deadly satirist, employing more of the orthodox surreal machinery and using it more obtrusively than Eluard. His letter to a tax collector (not a poem) is bitterly funny. He again is prophetic, sharing with Eluard 'la nuit totale, la nuit des loups,' but he seems to withdraw from the direct assertion of it into a sidelong statement in his general assumption of unreason.

ALEX COMFORT

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